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UNHCR ACTIVITIES FINANCED BY VOLUNTARY FUNDS: REPORT FOR 1993-1994 AND PROPOSED PROGRAMMES AND BUDGET FOR 1995

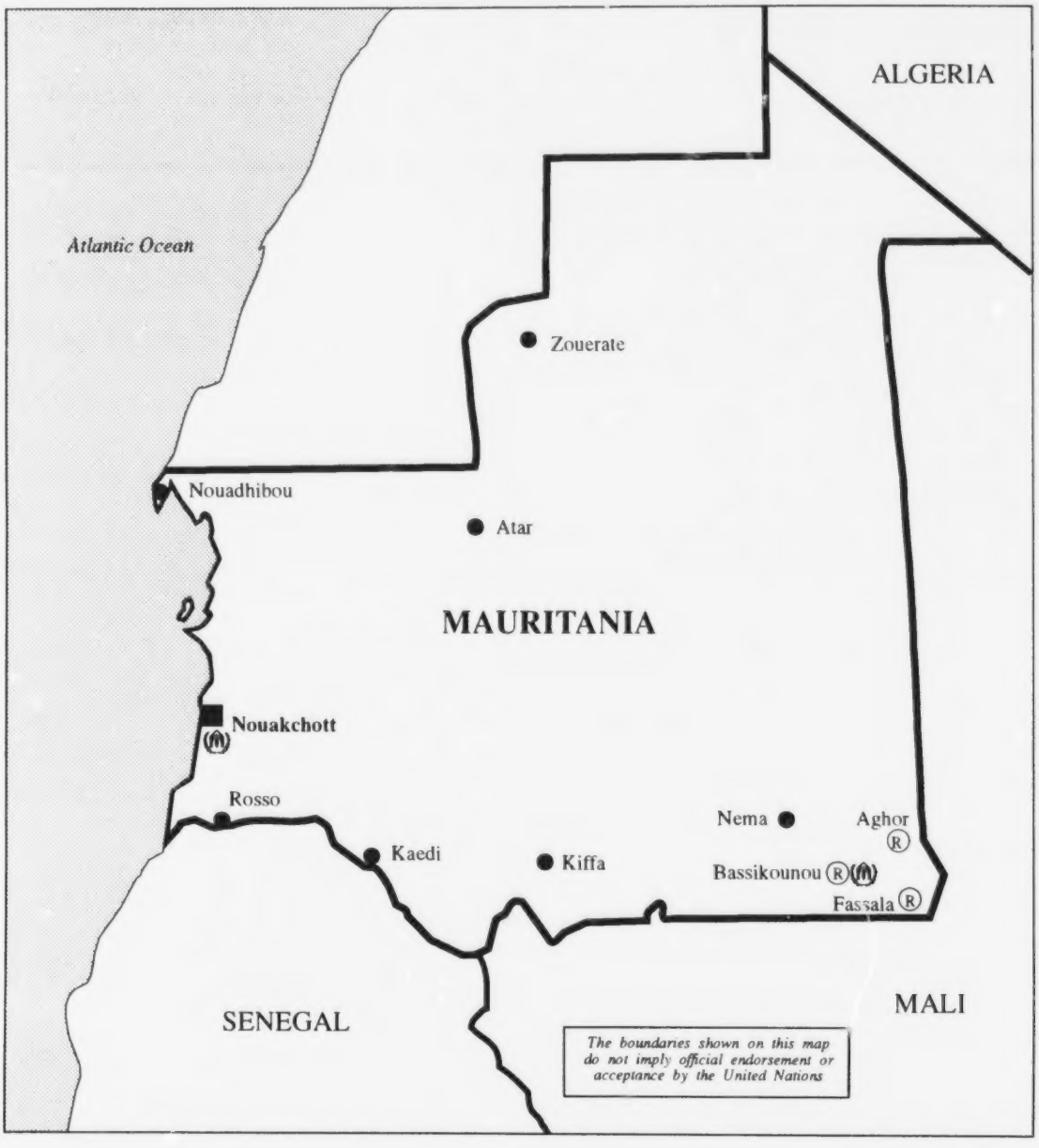
PART V. SOUTH WEST ASIA, NORTH AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Section 8 - Mauritania

(submitted by the High Commissioner)

GE.94-03268

MAURITANIA


ALGERIA
Atlantic Ocean
Zouerate
Nouadhibou
Atar
MAURITANIA
Nouakchott
Rosso
Nema
Aghor
Kaedi
Kiffa
Bassikounou
Fassala
MALI
SENEGAL
The boundaries shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations
0
200
Km.
Capital
UNHCR Office
Town or village
Settlement of refugees or displaced persons

V.8 MAURITANIA

Country overview

Characteristics of the refugee population

1. At 31 December 1993 Mauritania hosted 46,700 registered Malian refugees. They were accommodated in three camps, Bassikounou (19,390), Fassala (15,710), and Aghor (11,600), all located close on the eastern border with Mali, in the Hodh El Chargui region. The refugees are of nomadic and semi-nomadic origin and belong to the arab-berberian ethnic group, comprising Tuaregs and Moors, who rely essentially on pastoral activities.

Country of Origin	Number 1/1/93	Number 31/12/93	M	F	C	Location	Type of Assistance
Mali	37,500	46,700	29	37	34	Hodh El Chargui region, south east Mauritania	care & maintenance
Total	37,500	46,700	29	37	34		

2. Women and children make up the majority of the refugee population. Women above 15 years old represent approximately 37 per cent of the caseload, while children under 5 represent 15 per cent and those from 5 to 15 form 19 per cent of the population. Elderly people constitute a significant part of the refugee population.

Major developments (1993 and first quarter 1994)

3. A Tripartite Repatriation Agreement was signed in Bamako on 6 April 1994 between the Governments of Mali and Mauritania, and UNHCR.

4. The registration of newcomers, undertaken by the Mauritanian Food Security Commissionary (CSA) in January and February 1994, indicated a substantial increase in the population since the last registration undertaken in mid-1993. The additional camp residents who arrived over the period since the last census in mid-1993 are Malian refugees who were until then scattered in various areas of Mauritania, and included refugees who came directly from northern Mali. The CSA submitted a new total figure of 57,847 persons as of 28 February 1994, located mainly in Bassikounou (24,314), Fassala (19,410), and Aghor (14,123).

5. The CSA carried out a census to update the above figures to also include the recent influx of a few thousand refugees from northern Mali. The census registered 58,696 refugees as of 31 May 1994, with 24,457 in Bassikounou, 19,920 in Fassala and 14,319 in Aghor.

Programme objectives and priorities

6. UNHCR will promote a voluntary and progressive repatriation of the Malian refugees when conditions in Mali permit their return. Although there are expectations that a limited repatriation operation could get underway in 1994, it is foreseen that UNHCR and its implementing partners may have to continue providing assistance to some 60,000 refugees remaining in the camps.

7. Income-generating activities, mainly vegetable gardening and community centered activities for the rehabilitation and protection of the environment, which are designed to avoid dependency on international assistance, will be reinforced. The assistance activities will also address the specific needs of refugee women and children through appropriate social service activities, as well as ensure their easy access to available assistance and enhance their participation in health, education and income-generating activities, and vegetable gardening projects.

8. To accomplish this objective, UNHCR will continue to reinforce its cooperation with its governmental counterpart, CSA, as well as the Ministry of Health for activities relating to the health sector. Equally vital is the continuation and strengthening of the close cooperation between UNHCR and its non-governmental organization (NGO) partners - CARE-Australia, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Médecins du Monde (MDM) and the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC).

Programme delivery and administrative support costs

9. Given the requirements relating to the care and maintenance and the voluntary repatriation programmes for the Malian refugees in an environment characterized by harsh climatic conditions and scarce resources, the Office of the UNHCR Chargé de Mission in Mauritania has placed great emphasis in ensuring the efficient delivery of programme inputs and, to this end, the efficient management of programme delivery administrative support costs.

10. In view of the recent and ongoing influxes of refugees from northern Mali, UNHCR will strengthen its office in Bassikounou in the south-east part of the country to ensure its complete coverage and the fulfilment of its functions relating to programme planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting under the care and maintenance and voluntary repatriation programmes.

Arrangements for implementation/related inputs

11. CSA, a governmental department directly attached to the Office of the Prime Minister, has been designated by the Government to be UNHCR's counterpart. It coordinates the intervention of concerned Mauritanian authorities, and is also the governmental interlocutor for NGOs. In addition to its overall responsibilities, CSA is responsible for the registration of refugees, and for the reception, storage and distribution of the food rations and relief supplies provided by the World Food Programme (WFP) and UNHCR.

12. CARE-Australia is responsible for implementing all the non-food 'in-country' logistics, as well as for running the water and sanitation sectors on behalf of UNHCR. As in previous years, the health sector is entrusted to the Mauritanian Health Ministry, MSF and MDM.

13. ICMC is responsible for sectors which have a specific social impact on the refugee community, particularly education and social services, which are implemented with special regard to the needs of women. The activities mainly cover vegetable gardening, income-generating activities and community-centered environmental rehabilitation needs.

14. In 1994, a total of 9,235 metric tons of basic food, valued at $ 4,179,800 will be mobilized through WFP in close cooperation with UNHCR. In addition, UNHCR will endeavour to provide cash or in-kind contributions to meet supplementary food requirements.

General Programmes

(a) Variations in planned activities in 1993

15. The planned repatriation programme, aimed at facilitating the voluntary return to Mali of some 6,400 refugees, could not be implemented owing to uncertain conditions prevailing in northern Mali. However, shelter and domestic items have been procured internationally. These items are stored in the UNHCR warehouse in Nouakchott and can be readily mobilized once the repatriation operation starts.

16. The main variations in the implementation of 1993 care and maintenance activities have been the phasing out of the NGO, Equilibre, and its replacement by CARE-Australia to implement the logistic sector and part of the water sector, and the introduction of ICMC, which took over implementation of the education sector. Both these NGOs came to Mauritania in July 1993, and have significantly relieved UNHCR of the direct operational role it had assumed since 1991.

(b) 1994 planned implementation

17. Given the delay in implementing the voluntary repatriation programme, it is foreseen that the provision of food, potable water, health, sanitation, shelter, primary education and domestic support, will need to be continued. Measures are being taken to accommodate new arrivals in Bassikounou, Aghor and Fassala camps. Shelters are provided and domestic items distributed among heads of families.

18. In 1994, special emphasis has been placed on education with the assistance of ICMC, and some 2,250 refugee children have already been registered for education in the three camps. A midday meal is provided to encourage attendance. ICMC is also developing income-generating activities in the camps. Some of these activities will include the extension of small vegetable gardens. In addition, ICMC will also launch a programme to develop social activities among refugee women, including income-generating projects such as sewing and tailoring.

19. The protection of the environment will be promoted through the planting of some 12,500 trees in Bassikounou, Aghor and Fassal on the basis of 'one family, one tree'. Seeds are procured and distributed for cultivation of vegetables such as potatoes, tomatoes, onions, eggplant and carrots in family gardens for the benefit of some 800 refugee families in the same three camps. In addition, agricultural implements will be distributed to refugee families. CARE-Australia will improve water facilities, which remain a major concern in view of climatic conditions. The improvements include necessary repairs to three pumping

stations, and the related cisterns and delivery systems. The need to cater for new arrivals will also require some expansion of the water facilities. MSF and MDM will continue to provide health and medical services. A complete census of the refugee population is to be conducted by the authorities before the end of the year.

(c) **1995 programme proposals**

Care and maintenance

20. While UNHCR will continue to explore possibilities for voluntary repatriation, the prevailing situation in northern Mali calls for the continuation in 1995 of the existing care and maintenance activities to ensure the provision of adequate assistance for a population of 60,000 refugees. The desert environment and the distance from any sizeable cities do not provide opportunities for the refugees to develop independent sources of income. They are therefore essentially dependent on UNHCR assistance for survival. The estimated 1995 proposals under care and maintenance cover activities in the sectors of transport, domestic needs, water, sanitation, health, shelter, community services, education, crop production, livestock, forestry and income generation.

21. The sectoral breakdown for the initial and revised 1994 and proposed 1995 allocations is as follows (in US dollars):

Sector	Initial 1994	Revised 1994	Initial 1995
Transport	462,870	815,974	746,044
Domestic	785,600	525,870	677,625
Water	250,000	300,000	350,000
Sanitation	60,000	192,000	74,780
Health	748,353	694,051	625,887
Shelter	369,380	309,632	173,400
Community services	20,000	72,353	50,000
Education	270,000	262,000	294,300
Crop production	75,000	75,000	93,000
Livestock	128,205	0	0
Forestry	210,000	100,870	119,000
Income generation	25,000	100,000	50,000
Legal assistance	57,410	57,462	126,194
Agency op. support	463,282	232,588	452,570
Sub-total	3,925,100	3,737,800	3,832,800
Project personnel	812,400	0	0
Programme Delivery	0	739,300	701,400
Grand Total	4,737,500	4,477,100	4,534,200

Voluntary repatriation

22. In 1995, it is planned to provide transport assistance and repatriation kits for an initial 6,400 needy refugees who may wish to repatriate to Mali.

This assistance includes transport to the home cities, towns or villages in Mali for those refugees who are unable to provide for their own transport. It also includes a basic repatriation kit comprising such inputs as a 'start-up' three-month food supply to bridge the gap between arrival and the first food harvest. If prospects for voluntary repatriation materialize, the necessary funds to cover this initial operation will be requested from the General Allocation for Voluntary Repatriation.

Special Programmes

Other Trust Funds

23. In 1993, an in-kind contribution of $ 529,790 from the Government of Luxembourg allowed UNHCR to benefit from the services of an aeroplane for the transportation of staff and relief supplies (vaccines, medicines, spare parts and equipment) from Nouakchott to the refugee sites and for medical evacuation of critical cases. A contribution was made by the European Union (EU) in 1994 to cover similar needs for an initial period of six months.

24. In addition to basic food commodities supplied by WFP, the EU provided supplementary food, such as dried skimmed milk and canned fish, in 1993. The EU also covered transport costs. Similar contributions to be received from the EU in 1994 will provide for the purchase of supplementary food items, including dried skimmed milk and tea.

Programme Delivery and Administrative Support Costs

(a) Variations in planned activities in 1993

25. Total 1993 administrative expenditures were lower than expected owing to the fact that two Field Officer posts and two local posts were not filled for several months as planned repatriation activities did not take place. Savings were therefore realized under salaries and common staff costs, and consequently also under non-staff costs and general operating expenses.

(b) 1994 planned implementation

26. The revised 1994 requirement is lower than the initial estimate. Salary and common staff costs are expected to be similar to the initial estimate and the provision for the hiring of consultants for repatriation activities has been cancelled. Owing to the yet unclear prospects for any large-scale repatriation taking place, and the fact that furniture and equipment was purchased during 1993, some items budgeted for non-expendable property in the initial budget have also been cancelled. The revised balance represents requirements for furniture, electronic data processing equipment and two vehicles for the Field Office in Bassikounou. Emphasis will also be placed on improving the security of the UNHCR offices and staff in Mauritania by procuring security and communication equipments, since on several occasions UNHCR vehicles have been stolen at gunpoint.

(c) 1995 programme proposals

27. The initial 1995 estimate is slightly lower than the revised 1994 requirements due to an adjustment in the computation of costs for the post of

Junior Professional Officer. All previously approved time-limited posts have been extended until 31 December 1995.

28. Costs under non-staff costs relating to local travel on official business are estimated at marginally higher levels in anticipation of increased in-country air travel in 1995. Costs under general operating expenses are estimated to be lower, since a large part of the main improvements required for the Field Office in Bassikounou will have already taken place in 1994. Provision has been made for the replacement of one office vehicle.

UNHCR EXPENDITURE IN MAURITANIA

(in thousands of United States dollars)

1993	1994		1995	
AMOUNT OBLIGATED	ALLOCATION APPROVED BY 1993 EXCOM	PROPOSED REVISED ALLOCATION	SOURCE OF FUNDS AND TYPE OF ASSISTANCE	PROPOSED ALLOCATION/ PROJECTION
GENERAL PROGRAMMES (1)				
4,204.9 a/	4,737.5	3,737.8	CARE AND MAINTENANCE	3,832.8
385.0 b/	–	–	VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION	–
2.9 c/	–	–	RESETTLEMENT	–
–	–	739.3	PROGRAMME DELIVERY See Annexes I a and II a	701.4
4,592.8	4,737.5	4,477.1	SUB-TOTAL OPERATIONS	4,534.2
–	–	157.7	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT See Annexes I b and II b	181.2
4,592.8	4,737.5	4,634.8	TOTAL (1)	4,715.4
SPECIAL PROGRAMMES (2)				
2,518.6	–	344.4	OTHER TRUST FUNDS Various assistance	–
61.7	81.8	143.4	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT Junior Professional Officer	60.0
2,580.3	81.8	487.8	TOTAL (2)	60.0
7,173.1	4,819.3	5,122.6	GRAND TOTAL (1+2)	4,775.4

a/ of which US$ 81 incurred against Overall Allocation
b/ obligation incurred aginst the General Allocation for Voluntary Repatriation
c/ obligation incurred against Overall Allocation